

Chapter 5 Land Use & Development Quality

Introduction

One of the primary functions of a comprehensive plan is to set forth the community's policies regarding the future use of land and the desired quality of development. This chapter addresses these very important land use and development quality issues. While the Plan Framework element, Chapter 4, discusses where changes in land use and development character are encouraged or anticipated, this chapter makes recommendations for land use and development character throughout the City. It provides a recommended map of future land uses, the Land Use Guide, as well as detailed goals, objectives and strategies to implement the map and encourage quality development.

Background

Existing Land Use

A map of existing land use was prepared by linking the City's real estate assessment files to the Department of Planning and Community Development's GIS files. The City's assessors maintain data on each property in the City, including how it is currently used. This data was accessed, recategorized as necessary, and then mapped and checked. From this map, the Department of Planning and Community Development compiled statistics on the acreage in each land use category, which are depicted in the following table and pie chart.

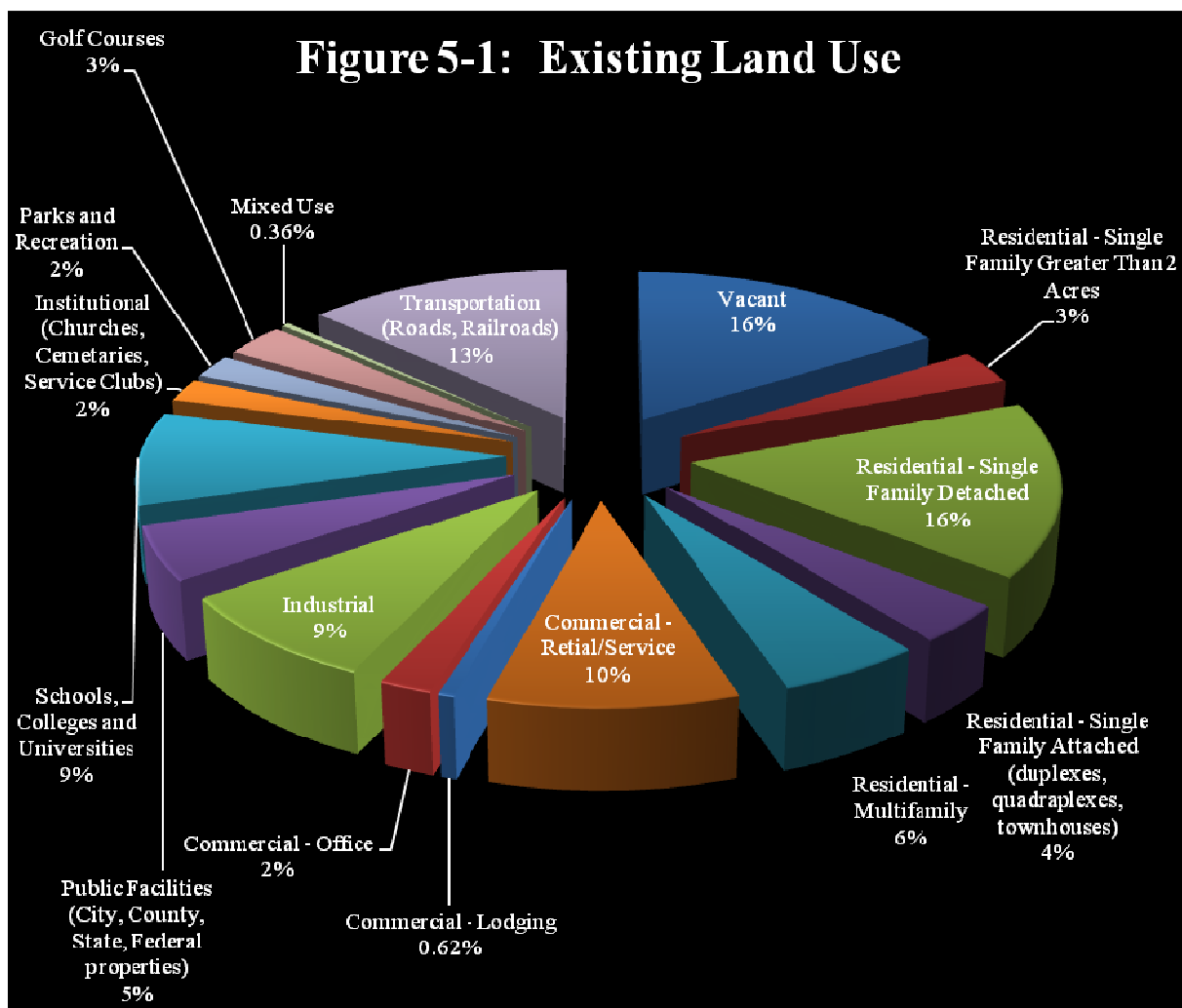
Table 5-1
Existing Land Use
In the City of Harrisonburg

Land Use	Area in Acres	Percentage of City Land Area not in Roads / RR	Percentage of Total City Land Area
Vacant	1802.95	18.70%	16.20%
Residential - Single Family Greater than 2 acres	343.09	3.56%	3.08%
Residential - Single Family Detached	1803.11	18.71%	16.20%
Residential - Single Family Attached (duplexes, quadraplexes, townhouses)	404.02	4.19%	3.63%
Residential - Multifamily	618.08	6.41%	5.55%
Commercial - Retail / Service	1066.58	11.06%	9.58%
Commercial - Lodging	68.87	0.71%	0.62%
Commercial - Office	222.38	2.31%	2.00%
Industrial	946.98	9.82%	8.51%
Public Facilities (city, county, state, federal properties)	563.13	5.84%	5.06%
Schools, Colleges and Universities	956.02	9.92%	8.59%
Institutional (churches, cemeteries, service clubs)	230.13	2.39%	2.07%
Parks and Recreation	235.67	2.44%	2.12%
Golf Courses	339.07	3.52%	3.05%
Mixed Use	39.57	0.41%	0.36%
SUBTOTAL (Land in Parcels)	9639.65	100.00 %	
Transportation (Roads, Railroads)	1488.86		13.38 %
TOTAL (Total City Area)	11128.51		100.00 %

Source: Department of Planning and Community Development

*Some parcels at the edge of the city have portions that extend into the county.
The county acreage is not included here.

The categories of land use shown in the pie chart are self-explanatory except for one, single family detached residential greater than 2 acres. These large parcels are categorized as single-family detached residential land because they have a house on them. A number of them are large properties, farms in many cases. However, it would not be accurate to categorize these properties as entirely residential, since significant portions of the properties are not developed. These “minimally developed” properties can easily be developed more densely and are more similar to vacant land than to single family residential subdivisions. The total of vacant land and single-family land greater than 2 acres (2,146 acres) represents the remaining “developable” land in the City (22 % of the city area in parcels).



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Zoning

The City’s Official Zoning Map determines where different types of uses are currently permitted in the City. Zoning districts are applied to both developed and vacant lands and thus determine to a great extent not only the types and locations of existing land uses, but also of future land uses. Table 5-3 provides a breakdown of the City’s land area by zoning district.

The Zoning Ordinance includes several overlay districts. The Institutional Overlay District has been applied to 38.51 acres of B-2 zoned land, 1.23 acres of R-2 zoned land, and 162.33 acres of R-3 zoned land; it provides supplemental regulations for Rockingham Memorial Hospital facilities, Eastern Mennonite University, Eastern Mennonite High School, and the Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community. The Residential Professional Overlay District applies to 12.53 acres of land zoned Urban Residential. This overlay permits professional offices and mixed residential/office buildings.

Table 5-2
City Land Area by Zoning District

Zoning District	Area in Acres	Percentage of City Land Area Not in Roads / Railroads
R-1 Single Family Residential	3115.12	32.32%
R-2 Residential	942.76	9.78%
R-3 Multiple Dwelling Residential	1661.55	17.24%
R-4 Planned Unit Residential	169.39	1.76%
R-5, High Density Residential District	140.42	1.46%
R-6, Low Density Mixed Residential Planned Community District	7.61	0.08%
R-7, Medium Density Mixed Residential Planned Community District	124.57	1.29%
U-R Urban Residential	47.47	0.49%
B-1 Central Business District	92.38	0.96%
B-2 General Business District	1451.28	15.06%
M-1 General Industrial	1887.10	19.58%
TOTAL	9639.65	100.00 %

Source: Department of Planning and Community Development

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Many cities are interested to know the zoning of remaining vacant and minimally developed land. Such figures are useful for determining future growth areas and the land uses that will occur in these growth areas. Table 5-3 summarizes the zoning classification of Harrisonburg's remaining vacant and minimally developed land as of Summer 2009.

Table 5-3
Zoning Classification
Of Vacant and Minimally Developed Land

Zoning District	Vacant and Minimally Developed Acres
R-1 Single Family Residential	953.30
R-2 Residential	255.56
R-3 Multiple Dwelling Residential	292.01
R-4 Planned Unit Residential	13.30
R-5, High Density Residential District	129.80
R-6, Low Density Mixed Residential Planned Community District	7.61
R-7, Medium Density Mixed Residential Planned Community District	121.56
U-R Urban Residential	4.26
B-1 Central Business District	12.40
B-2 General Business District	427.34
M-1 General Industrial	475.48
TOTAL	2692.62

Source: Department of Planning and Community Development

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Approximately 35 percent of the remaining vacant land is zoned for single-family residential development (953 acres zoned R-1). For economic development, the City has roughly 915 acres available; almost 18 percent available for industrial development (within the M-1 district) and about 16 percent and less than 1 percent available for general business uses (within the B-2 and B-1 classifications respectively).

Planned Land Use

The Land Use Guide represents the City’s policy for what it would like to be—its “land use vision.” The 2004 Comprehensive Plan included a Land Use Guide (amended in 2006), which recommended future land uses. In some cases, the Land Use Guide recommended land uses different than what current zoning would allow. The 2004 Land Use Guide was similar to the 1998 Land Use Guide, however major differences were found in their recommendations for the larger undeveloped areas of the City at that time. Table 5-4 categorizes land according to the planned land uses of the 2006 Land Use Guide.

Table 5-4
City Land Use As Recommended
By the 2006^ Land Use Guide

Planned Land Use	Area in Acres	Percentage of City Land Area Not in Roads / Railroads
Low Density Residential	1646.14	17.08%
Low Density Mixed Residential	698.34	7.24%
Neighborhood Residential	612.62	6.36%
Medium Density Residential	695.63	7.22%
Medium Density Mixed Residential	457.07	4.74%
High Density Residential	286.19	2.97%
Mixed Use Development	302.02	3.13%
Commercial	1431.31	14.85%
Planned Business	72.53	0.75%
Professional	83.61	0.87%
Industrial	1369.12	14.20%
Institutional	208.00	2.16%
Public / Semi-Public	983.93	10.21%
Conservation, Recreation and Open Space	793.14	8.23%
TOTAL	9639.65	100%

Source: Department of Planning and Community Development

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^The Land Use Guide was amended in 2006 after the adoption of the 2004 Comprehensive Plan

The 2009 Land Use Guide

The 2009 Land Use Guide, provided at the end of this chapter, recommends future land uses in the City. It is the official land use policy map of the Comprehensive Plan and is to be used as a guide in decisions on such matters as rezoning and special use permit proposals and the location of public facilities. Since the last Comprehensive Plan update, new zoning districts and other ordinance amendments have been established, which has allowed the land use guide and current zoning regulations to complement one another better than they have in years past. This should provide better guidance and regulations to allow developers to strive for desired land uses. The categories of land use on the map are described below.

Low Density Residential

These areas consist of single family detached dwellings with a maximum density of 1 to 4 units per acre. Low density sections are found mainly in and around well established neighborhoods. The low density residential areas are designed to maintain the existing character of neighborhoods and to provide traditional areas for home ownership.

Low Density Mixed Residential

These large undeveloped areas located at the edge of the City are planned for residential development containing a mix of large and small-lot single family detached dwellings and attractive green spaces. Planned “open space” (also known as “cluster”) developments are encouraged. The intent is to allow innovative residential building types and permit creative subdivision design solutions that promote neighborhood cohesiveness, walkability, connected street grids, community green spaces, and protection of environmental resources. Such innovative residential building types as zero lot-line development and patio homes will be considered as well as other new single family residential forms. The gross density of development in these areas should be in the range of 1 to 6 dwelling units per acre.

Neighborhood Residential

These are older neighborhoods, which can be characterized by large housing units on small lots. This type of land use highlights those neighborhoods in which existing conditions dictate the need for careful consideration of the types and densities of future residential development. Infill development and redevelopment must be designed so as to be compatible with the existing character of the neighborhood.

Medium Density Residential

The medium density residential areas are designated in areas near major thoroughfares or commercial areas. Most of these areas have been developed or are approved for development of a variety of housing types such as single-family, duplex, and in special circumstances, apartments. Depending on the specific site characteristics, densities in these areas may range from 1 to 15 units per acre.

Medium Density Mixed Residential

These largely undeveloped areas continue the existing medium density character of adjacent areas, but in a different form. They are planned for small-lot single family detached and single family attached neighborhoods where green spaces are integral design features. Apartments could also be permitted under special circumstances. They should be planned communities that exhibit the same innovative features as described for the low density version of mixed residential development described above. The gross density of development in these areas should be in the range of 4 to 12 dwelling units per acre.

High Density Residential

A number of areas in the City have been developed in high density residential use, mostly apartment buildings at densities ranging from 12 to 24 dwelling units per acre. Many of these existing clusters of multifamily development and adjacent areas approved or planned for such development are identified as high density residential on the Land Use Guide.

Mixed Use Development Areas

The Mixed Use Development category includes both existing and proposed new mixed use areas. Downtown is an existing area that exhibits and is planned to continue to contain a mix of land uses. The quality and character of the mix of uses in downtown should be governed by a downtown revitalization plan, as recommended in Chapter 14, Revitalization. New mixed use areas shown on the Land Use Guide map are intended to combine residential and non-residential

uses in planned neighborhoods where the different uses are finely mixed instead of separated. Quality architectural design features and strategic placement of green spaces will ensure development compatibility. These areas are prime candidates for “live-work” and traditional neighborhood developments. Live-work developments combine residential and office/service uses allowing people to both live and work in the same area. Live-work spaces may be combined in the same building or on the same street. All buildings have a similar residential scale. Traditional neighborhood development permits integrated mixing of residential, retail, office and employment uses to create a neighborhood with the following characteristics:

- The design of the neighborhood allows residents to work, shop, and carry out many of life’s other activities within the neighborhood.
- A mix of land uses is provided. The proximity of uses allows residents to walk, ride a bicycle, or take transit for many trips between home, work, shopping, and school.
- A variety of housing types is provided at a range of densities, types (multifamily, townhouse, and single family), and costs. Neighborhoods are heterogeneous mixes of residences in close proximity to commercial and employment uses.
- The neighborhood includes a retail, office, employment, and/or entertainment core to provide economic and social vitality, as well as a major focus and meeting place in the community.
- The circulation system serves many modes of transportation and provides choices for alternative transportation routes. Streets, alleys, and pedestrian and bike paths connect to the surrounding area. Streets and alleys generally follow a grid pattern to provide these route choices and connections. Traffic calming techniques may be used to reduce vehicle speed and increase pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- The overall intensity of development is designed to be high enough to support transit service.
- A system of parks; open spaces; and civic, public, and institutional uses is included to create a high quality of life and civic identity for the community.
- The cluster concept is embraced so as to concentrate development in environmentally suitable areas and to preserve and protect important environmental and cultural resources.

The gross residential density in areas outside downtown should not exceed an average of 15 units per acre, though all types of residential units are permitted: single family detached, single family attached and apartments. Apartments are permitted only if single family detached and/or attached units are also provided and together cover a greater percentage of the project site. Residential densities in downtown may be higher than an average of 15 units per acre.

Commercial

Commercial uses include retail, office, wholesale, or service functions. Restaurant and lodging uses are also included. These areas are generally found along the City’s major travel corridors. The largest concentration of commercial land use is located between E. Market Street and Reservoir Street and includes the Valley Mall, a number of shopping centers, and significant office development.

Planned Business

These areas are suitable for commercial development but need careful controls to ensure compatibility with adjacent land uses. The maintenance of functional and aesthetic integrity

should be emphasized in review of applications for development and redevelopment and should address such matters as: control of access; use of service roads or reverse frontage development; landscaping and buffering; parking; setback; signage; building mass and height; and orientation in regard to aesthetic concerns.

Professional

These areas are designated for professional service oriented uses with consideration to the character of the area. These uses are found in the residential areas along major thoroughfares and adjacent to the Central Business District. Conversion of houses in these areas to office and professional service uses is permitted with appropriate attention to maintaining compatibility with adjacent residential areas in the same manner as described for Planned Business areas.

Industrial

These areas are composed of land and structures used for light and general manufacturing, wholesaling, warehousing, high-technology, research and development and related activities. They include the major existing and future employment areas of the City.

Public / Semi-Public

These lands are designated for public and semi-public use. They include lands owned or leased by the Commonwealth of Virginia (except for institutions of higher learning), the federal government, the City of Harrisonburg, and other governmental organizations. Examples of uses included in this category are public schools, libraries, City Hall and City administrative and support facilities. City parks are included in the Conservation, Recreation and Open Space category

Institutional

Lands designated for development by certain nonprofit and public institutional uses such as colleges and universities, hospitals, offices of nonprofit organizations, community assembly uses and institutions that provide for the shelter and care of people.

Conservation, Recreation and Open Space

The City's parks and golf course are included in this category, as well as private open space recreation uses, such as country clubs.

Table 5-5 presents the amounts and percentages of the various land uses recommended by the 2009 Land Use Guide.

Table 5-5
City Land Use As Recommended
By the 2009 Land Use Guide

Planned Land Use	Area in Acres	Percentage of City Land Area Not in Roads / Railroads
Low Density Residential		
Low Density Mixed Residential		
Neighborhood Residential		
Medium Density Residential		
Medium Density Mixed Residential		
High Density Residential		
Mixed Use Development		
Commercial		
Planned Business		
Professional		
Industrial		
Institutional		
Public / Semi-Public		
Conservation, Recreation and Open Space		
TOTAL	9639.65	100%

Source: Department of Planning and Community Development

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The following goals, objectives and strategies address the major land use changes recommended by the Plan Framework Map and 2009 Land Use Guide as well as recommended policies to improve the design and character of new development and redevelopment.

Land Use & Development Quality Goals, Objectives & Strategies

Goal 1. To improve the quality and compatibility of land use and development.

Objective 1.1 To promote development and redevelopment that reinforces the City's unique character and sense of place.

Strategy 1.1.1 To work with citizens to identify design elements that define the City's unique character and sense of place or that would improve design quality. Administration of a community character or visual preference survey would help in this effort.

Strategy 1.1.2 To develop a set of design guidelines for new development and redevelopment based on these design elements. Such design guidelines might address such matters as:

- Landscaping
- Preservation of green space

- Preservation of historic resources
 - Placement of buildings and parking lots
 - Building bulk and height
 - How buildings address the street
 - Signage
 - Lighting
- Strategy 1.1.3 To incorporate appropriate elements of the design guidelines into the City's land use codes, while leaving other elements discretionary.
- Objective 1.2 To ensure that the design of streets, public facilities, and other public investments reinforces the City's unique character and sense of place.
- Strategy 1.2.1 To use the same process as outlined under Objective 1.1 to develop design guidelines for public development projects.
- Strategy 1.2.2 To review and revise the City's street standards so as not to jeopardize VDOT funding, yet at the same time to seek to reduce street widths, incorporate traffic calming measures and/or permit low impact development design features.
- Objective 1.3 To create positive images of the City through landscaping and design improvements at the City's gateways and along major travel corridors.
- Strategy 1.3.1 To prepare an evaluation of the visual quality and entry experience at each gateway shown on the Plan Framework Map and plan for appropriate improvements. Such improvements could include updated entry signage, landscape plantings, screening of unsightly views, and new development and redevelopment recommendations. Improved signage from gateways to major destinations should be considered as part of gateway plans.
- Strategy 1.3.2 To conduct a special study of each of the corridor enhancement areas shown on the Plan Framework Map to address such issues as:
- Land use and design quality
 - Streetscape improvements
 - Vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle circulation
 - Access management
 - Development, redevelopment and reuse opportunities
 - Conservation of special features
 - Improvements to utilities and public facilities
 - Signage
- Objective 1.4 To encourage mixed use development where different types of properties enhance and complement one another.
- Strategy 1.4.1 To promote the development of mixed residential and mixed use areas as recommended on the Plan Framework Map, Land Use Guide and in the text of this plan.

- Strategy 1.4.2 To develop a zoning approach to require, permit and/or provide incentives for the development of low density and medium density mixed residential neighborhoods as identified on the Plan Framework Map and Land Use Guide. Ordinance provisions would allow innovative residential building types and permit creative subdivision design solutions that promote neighborhood cohesiveness, walkability, connected street grids, community green spaces, and protection of historic and environmental resources.
- Strategy 1.4.3 To develop a zoning approach to require, permit and/or provide incentives for the development of live-work neighborhoods with characteristics similar to the mixed residential neighborhoods but with compatible residential-scale office uses permitted as well.
- Strategy 1.4.4 To develop a zoning approach to require, permit and/or provide incentives for traditional neighborhood development as described in the plan text.
- Objective 1.5 To ensure that new development of residential, commercial and industrial properties will be compatible with surrounding properties.
- Strategy 1.5.1 To revise the zoning ordinance to require landscape buffers, screening, or alternative architectural solutions to provide transitions between potentially incompatible land uses.
- Objective 1.6 To rezone properties into conformity with the new comprehensive plan, in order to reduce incompatibility.
- Strategy 1.6.1 To remove the potential for development or redevelopment of uses incompatible with their surroundings by initiating appropriate rezonings or text amendments as indicated by the Land Use Guide.
- Objective 1.7 To encourage and promote aesthetically pleasing high-end residential communities.
- Strategy 1.7.1 To include in the City's land use codes and manuals design provisions and performance standards to improve the design quality of all residential development. Such provisions and standards may address:
- Building setback and orientation standards that enhance social interaction.
 - Street system design that promotes connectivity and addresses traffic calming measures to reduce speeding.
 - Requirements for sidewalks and trails that facilitate and encourage walking and bicycle use.
 - Streetscape planting requirements.
 - Standards for the placement of parking areas and garages so as to avoid streetscapes dominated by parking lots and garage doors.

- Size, quality, design, character, and facilities in preserved open spaces.
- Strategy 1.7.2 To require, permit and/or provide incentives for “open space” or “cluster” development so as to preserve green space within new subdivisions.
- Goal 2. To promote novel patterns of development like those developed early in the City’s history – vital, well planned and well integrated mixed-housing and mixed-use urban areas of distinct character.
 - Objective 2.1 To designate recommended mixed housing and mixed use areas.
 - Strategy 2.1.1 To promote the development of mixed residential and mixed use areas as recommended on the Plan Framework Map, Land Use Guide and in the text of this plan.
 - Objective 2.2 To adopt zoning, subdivision and other measures to promote the development of mixed-housing and mixed-use urban areas of distinct character.
 - Strategy 2.2.1 To develop a zoning approach to require, permit and/or provide incentives for the development of low density and medium density mixed residential neighborhoods as identified on the Plan Framework Map and Land Use Guide. Ordinance provisions would allow innovative residential building types and permit creative subdivision design solutions that promote neighborhood cohesiveness, walkability, connected street grids, community green spaces, and protection of historic and environmental resources.
 - Strategy 2.2.2 To develop a zoning approach to require, permit and/or provide incentives for the development of live-work neighborhoods with characteristics similar to the mixed residential neighborhoods but with compatible residential-scale office uses permitted as well.
 - Strategy 2.2.3 To develop a zoning approach to require, permit and/or provide incentives for traditional neighborhood development as described in the plan text.